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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002048

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#) [CY](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY'S "WHERE ARE THEY NOW" FILE: CHP'S KEMAL DERSIS

REF: 02 ANKARA 7606

(U) Classified by Acting Political Counselor Nicholas S. Kass. Reason: 1.5(b)(d).

1. (C) In a March 28 meeting with poloff, opposition CHP deputy and former State Minister Kemal Dervis offered his views of USG-GOT relations, Iraq, Cyprus, and his own political ambitions. Dervis made the following points:

-- He sees himself as leading an effort to modernize CHP, in part by trying to bring more women into the party fold;

-- CHP, he stated, has always maintained a close political and ideological relationship with the Turkish military. An analysis of Nov. 2002 election voting patterns reveals, he claimed, that CHP won 80% of vote in areas heavily populated by the military and their dependents;

-- CHP's core is dominated by traditional Kemalism -- "statism, suspicion of foreigners, and nationalism," Dervis explained. Atatürk had voiced some important truths -- among these the idea that his own principles were subject to change. Unfortunately, the hard-core Kemalists in CHP (and elsewhere) "refuse to modernize." To them, modernization is simply a Trojan horse for foreign interests that conflict with Kemalism -- and thus threaten Turkey;

-- On Iraq, Dervis tried to walk both sides of the fence. He said he supported USG overall goals, but as an "internationalist" he cannot support "the way you are doing it." According to Dervis, CHP's opposition to the US-led war effort is due to a variety of reasons, including: 1) a primitive oppositionist impulse in CHP; and 2) traditional leftist anti-war sentiments. He offered the self-serving and somewhat mystifying rationalization that, had CHP supported the government on Iraq, anti-American sentiment in Turkey "would be even more intense than it is now."

-- Regarding Cyprus, Dervis asserted that Turkey is not to blame for the failure of the UNSYG sponsored settlement talks. The problem, he noted, "has deep historical roots." Turkish psychology on this issue is complex; it is important to avoid feeding the perception among Turks that "something is being imposed on them."

Comment

2. (C) Once seen as CHP's shining political star, Dervis' luster has faded considerably since the Nov. 2002 elections. CHP leader Deniz Baykal -- perhaps seeing Dervis as a potential rival -- excluded him from important committees and CHP executive organs. Instead, Dervis became head of CHP's politically impotent science research arm. According to CHP M.P. and Human Rights Committee member Engin Altay, Dervis is relegated to "producing reports that no one reads." Many of our CHP contacts say Dervis rarely even makes an appearance at Parliament.

3. (C) Dervis' many years in the United States and familiarity with the wider world insulates him from many of the xenophobic pathologies of his colleagues in the Establishment intelligentsia and other circles. His private criticism of Kemalism -- at odds with his politically problematic public comments in the days before the elections (reftel) -- have considerable merit. Nevertheless, he displays at a minimum a high degree of comfort with the party line of CHP boss Deniz Baykal. Before the election, erstwhile Dervis allies began to criticize him for "selling out" to Baykalism and its principal-free approach to politics. Dervis' performance to date as a politician has

done nothing to dispel such sentiments.
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